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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1332
INFO RHEHNSC/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L VILNIUS 000401

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/28/2017
TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [LH](#)
SUBJECT: (C) LITHUANIAN DEFENSE MINISTER CONFIRMS DRAW-DOWN
IN IRAQ

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN CLOUD FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador Cloud reiterated the U.S. preference that the GOL leave a platoon of troops in Iraq to Lithuanian Defense Minister Juozas Olekas on May 28. Olekas said that, after deliberations with President Adamkus and FM Vaitiekunas, the GOL has decided to keep some staff officers and trainers, but not a platoon, in Iraq. Acknowledging that it fell short of U.S. expectations, Olekas attributed the decision to increasing parliamentary pressure, worsening public opinion about the war, and other military commitments. End Summary.

IRAQ PRESENCE

¶2. (C) On May 28, Ambassador Cloud and Defense Attache met with Lithuanian Minister of Defense Juozas Olekas. Ambassador Cloud said that we understand the difficulties presented by Danish and British troop reductions this summer and how that would create challenges for the logistical support of the Lithuanian platoon in Basrah. He emphasized the unified USG support for a Lithuanian platoon remaining in Iraq, including General Petraeus's strong preference for coherent combat formations to remain in Iraq. The Ambassador recalled that Acting DASD Debra Cagan conveyed this message during her visit to Vilnius two months ago, and DASD Dan Fata reinforced the message.. The unified USG position, the Ambassador concluded, is that Lithuania should keep a platoon in Iraq.

¶3. (C) Olekas responded by saying that the Danish drawdown is only one reason for GOL reconsideration of the continuing Lithuanian presence in Iraq. Public opinion is becoming increasingly opposed to the war. Political pressure in the Seimas (parliament) has also become a factor. Lithuania continues to lead and fund a PRT in Afghanistan. Lithuania will deploy Special Operations Forces (SOF) to Southern Afghanistan this summer. The GOL would like to have stronger units consolidated in Afghanistan and Kosovo while continuing some presence in Iraq. The GOL is also considering an enhanced presence in Kosovo in a combined Polish-Lithuanian-Ukrainian battalion.

¶4. (C) After much deliberation, Olekas continued, the President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and he agreed that the best course of action is to keep some staff officers and trainers in Iraq. Olekas argued that this would be the best course of action in terms of maintaining long-term support in the Seimas for international operations. He hoped he would succeed in his new proposal to the Seimas to extend approval for international operations for three years, and asked for USG understanding. He said that he knew that the GOL's intended course of action did not meet U.S.

expectations, but he expressed the hope that it will enable the MOD to maintain political support for foreign deployments while they also seek to increase Lithuanian defense spending.

15. (C) Olekas added that the GOL still considers the United States to be a very important defense partner. He said that Lithuania will continue to work closely with the United States and will continue to pursue productive cooperation.

16. (C) Ambassador Cloud assured Olekas that we remain friends and allies. Lithuania, as a sovereign state, will make its own decisions, but we want to be clear about the USG position. There is work that remains to be done in Iraq, and we need capable units from our coalition partners to see it through.

KELLY